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ABSTRACT

This paper describes how a school district in Maine implemented an outdoor education program centered around National Trails Day (a day of awareness of outdoor recreational areas in the United States). The program combined classroom learning with an all-day hike on the Appalachian Trail by 240 seventh-grade students. Numerous teachers, school administrators, and parent volunteers also participated in the program. Goals were to expose students to hiking and outdoor activities and careers and recreational areas a close distance from their homes; to improve students' self-concept through group work and goal setting; and to develop cross-team and cross-school relationships through group work toward a common goal. Classroom activities included a slide show presentation by an Appalachian Trail "through" hiker, (from Maine to Georgia) an outdoor career awareness day, topographical map reading, wilderness first aid, and journal writing. For the all-day hike, students were divided into groups of 10 or less and assigned to a district employee and parent volunteer. During the hike, students were assigned duties such as reading and marking topographical maps, writing in a hike log, collecting objects to be used in art projects, and collecting insects. Includes materials needed, program costs, and suggestions for program implementation. (LP)

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# NATIONAL TRAILS DAY

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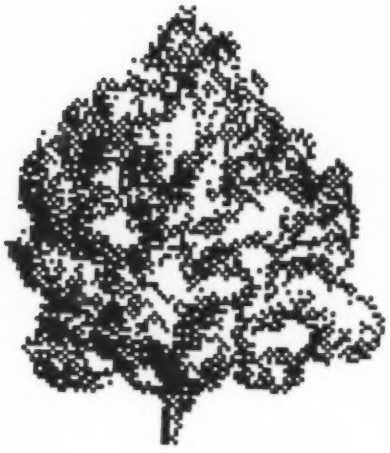

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Project SEED

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## National Trails Day Project:

This project was an interdisciplinary unit centered around National Trails Day (a day of awareness of outdoor recreational areas in the United States). The project involved all the student's subjects to some degree and culminated with an all day hike on the Appalachian Trail in our area.

## Participants:

This project involved all 7th graders in our district (240 students) which meant the combination of three teams and two schools. We involved core teachers from all three teams plus the teachers from the specialty areas who also had taught these students throughout the year. Also involved were the principal and assistant principal and many parent volunteers.

## Project Goals:

1. To expose the students to the life long activity of hiking and outdoor activities/careers.
2. To expose the students to recreational areas and natural beauty within easy traveling distance from their homes.
3. To improve students self concept through group work and goal setting and accomplishment of those goals.
4. To develop cross team and cross school relationships through group work toward a common goal (reaching the hike destination).

## Outcomes:

Students gain a new appreciation for the natural beauty of their own area and a new sense of responsibility to preserve that beauty.

Students will make new friends within their hiking groups.

Students will develop a new interest (hiking) to carry with them into later life.

## Procedures and Instructions:

1. Look for natural recreational areas within travel distance of your school and develop ways that these could be used as part of a unit field trip.
2. Develop activities centered around these outdoor recreational activities.

We kick ours off with an Appalachian Trail thru hiker (Georgia to Maine) who comes and does a slide show presentation. We also have an outdoor career awareness day. Speakers involved in careers connected with the outdoors set up stations and the students rotate through these.

In their separate subject areas, teachers use some of the following related lessons:

Social Studies - History of the Appalachian Trail, topographical map reading, creation of large wall sized maps of the Appalachian Trail.

Science - Wilderness first aid, Insect collections, leaf identification, terrarium construction.

Math - quadrant reading and map reading using graphing.

English - journal writing, making of newscast surrounding the hike preparation and actual hike.

Art - student construct a sculpture using objects of nature (dead).

Computer - students design a letter head to be used on all project correspondence and type related reports.

Home Economics - students learn about healthy high energy snack and lunch packing.

Physical Education - using heart rate readings and aerobic exercises the students prepare themselves for the rigors of hiking.

## Actual Outdoor Activity:

Split students into groups of 10 or less for every district employee and assign an additional parent volunteer per group. The groups should be split according to physical abilities and matched up to outdoor activities accordingly.

Choose one class to Prep the students the day before the activity so that the presentation is very consistent. On the day of the hike check students to make sure they are properly prepared for the hike.

Make sure every hike leader has a first aid kit. At the hike site a vehicle should be available in case of emergency.

During the hike, assign duties to be performed along the way. Examples: Reading and marking topographical maps; writing in a hike log; collecting of dead nature objects to be used in their art project; collecting of insects; group building activities; other activities could be added by individual hike leaders or group activities leader.

After the hike, sharing of writing activities, hiking experiences, map markings, etc... could be the center of follow up activities.

## Time:

This project has many time options depending on what the group of teachers wants to allot and can vary from subject to subject. The actual hikes can also vary in time (our hikes were allotted approximately 7 hours on the trail).

## Materials:

The following materials are needed for this project:

- First Aid Kit for each hiking group
- Contour maps for the areas to be hiked (student copies can be photocopied)
- 3"x3" mirrors and 4" or 5" by 4" or 5" pieces of wood are needed for the art project (per student or could be grouped)
- A log book for each hiking group.

The cost of the project varies greatly depending on the number of students involved and the amount of "extras" your school/team wants to put into it.

## Wrap Up:

The National Trails Day Project is a great way to expose your students to a life long activity, the natural environment and the beauty of our own state at the same time you are teaching them valuable lessons in all subject areas. The team building and new friendships that evolve from the hiking experience are a bonus that will help your students far into the future.